

Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations

South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council for the General Agency South Dakota Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (Board)

As reflected in the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2013:

The **State Rehabilitation Council** – is established in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act) and 34 CFR 361.16-361.17 of its implementing regulations.

The State Rehabilitation Council - known in South Dakota as the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** (BVR or Board) – gives advice to and works in partnership with the general vocational rehabilitation agency in South Dakota - **Division of Rehabilitation Services**.

The **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively and remains responsive to the needs of those served.

The **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** works in partnership with the **Division of Rehabilitation Services** in developing policies, planning activities, evaluating program effectiveness and carrying out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program.

The working relationship between the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** and the **Division of Rehabilitation Services** is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services.

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation met on four different occasions during this reporting period: December 13/14, 2012 in Oacoma; March 25/26, 2013 in Sioux Falls; June 6/7, 2013 in Aberdeen; and September 12/13, 2013 in Mitchell. These meetings were open to the public and held in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and the State's open meeting law, SDCL, 1-25-1.

Summary of Input and Recommendations:

- A request was made for an update on the SD Disability Employment Initiative Grant, which was provided by staff from the Department of Labor and Regulation and Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. Review of grant goals included: improved coordination and collaboration among numerous available employment and training programs, building effective community partnerships to better leverage resources; and better serve individuals with disabilities with positive employment outcomes. The Board offered its support for the continuation of this grant and its methodology in offering targeted services.
- A Survey of Parents of Children with Hearing Loss was requested to be completed by the Governor's Office and was a collaborative effort between the Board of Regents, SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, SD School for the Deaf and the Department of Human Services. The Board asked that the Division keep them abreast of survey results which outline information about developmental, educational, social, recreational, transition, work readiness, and career development needs of South Dakota's youth with hearing loss. (Results were received January 2014).
- The Board was kept apprised of staff training in using cognitive motivational training tools to negotiate behavior change in consumers. Counselors are learning to access a client's situation and learning to be more effective with time and resources. The Division reported that the training methods were improving

outcomes and success for individuals with disabilities, which the Board fully supported.

- A draft of long term and short term goals was developed for the Department of Human Services following a Legislative Sunset Review on the agency. The Department Secretary solicited feedback on this strategic plan document from different entities. During the December meeting, the Board spent time reviewing the document and provided the Department Secretary with recommendations. Many of the Board's recommendations were incorporated into the final document.
- The Division started the "Future's Initiative" project several years ago - a project designed for vocational rehabilitation staff who are interested in moving into a new, different or expanded role within the agency. Future's members are given the opportunity to expand their knowledge, skills, and abilities by taking leadership roles in project development and participating in quality training to become exemplary leaders. Division staff have attended various meetings during this reporting period to provide updates to members. The Board supports this initiative and vision for succession planning and encourages its continuance.
- The Executive Committee presented the Annual Report in draft format during the December meeting. Members were asked to submit edits prior to the end of the month. The report was finalized and submitted to the Governor and RSA Commissioner as well as other interested entities e.g., Statewide Independent Living Council, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BSBVI).
- A committee of the Board reviewed a draft provider survey instrument developed by Division staff. The survey was designed to identify the training needs of providers the Division works with to learn more about barriers that hinder attendance, and suggestions to increase provider participation. The committee reviewed the recommendations and solicited additional input from the Board.

The survey was disseminated and the results were shared at the March meeting.

- During this reporting period the Board developed a “Public Comment” outline which accompanies each meeting agenda to demonstrate that time is set aside each meeting for “Public Comment”. The outline defines how a person can provide comment i.e., in person, written, oral, or electronic communication. The information also provides staff contact information if an individual has other comments or questions. This accompanies all meeting agendas which are posted on the Department’s website as well as posted at their business office.
- The guidelines for the due process procedures were revised, providing better clarification on instructions and implementation of due process. At the request of the Board, a sample letter to the consumer was added to the materials, as well as other input. The guidelines were also shared with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and general public as well as posted on the Department’s website for additional feedback.
- A request was made to meet with the Business Resource Network (BRN) and their Board of Directors at the March meeting. Members wanted an update on activities and to hear of issues that businesses are bringing forward. Members learned about activities completed to address public education, inclusion, accessibility and the promotion of employment of people with disabilities. Issues pertaining to accommodation requests, disability etiquette training and various questions about hiring people with disabilities were discussed. Dialogue continued about ways that the Board and Division can better partner with BRN.
- The Board supported the Governor’s Awards Ceremony in addition to the solicitation and gathering of nominations. Representatives of the Board, SILC, and BSBVI review nominations and provide their recommendations to the Governor for his final review and approval.

- Due to a request, the Board revisited their funding application guidelines to further clarify the process. An ad hoc committee was appointed and they reviewed the application form and process and encouraged all members to provide input regarding the documents. Original documents were forwarded to the full Board and Division staff seeking input, in addition to re-drafted items being forwarded again for further review prior to the June meeting. Action was delayed on approving the funding application forms until the September meeting when a quorum was present.
- The Board and Division were invited to co-sponsor a public gathering in May along with Standing Rock Sioux Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council, SD Advocacy Services, SD Parent Connection, and SD Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Board approved financial support to convene the disability summit/gathering in Mobridge, South Dakota. Conversation during the June meeting stressed the importance of having a personal connection with different program/people to host a successful event. The Board representative of the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program was instrumental in spearheading this event.
- The Board approved financial support to eleven communities as recommended by a review committee, which had representation of Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Statewide Independent Living Council. The Board, BSBVI, SILC and Divisions also provide support of manpower hours and expertise to events which provide information and education to the public regarding the strengths and talents that people with disabilities bring to the workforce. An event was held in Eagle Butte hosted by the Oun'yekiyapi Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program having local, tribal, state and federal programs present.

- At the request of the Division, The Department of Veterans Affairs, Vocational and Employment Program staff attended the March meeting and shared information about their program. Members learned about services provided to eligible veterans (i.e., accommodations, assistive technology, specialized training and independent living skills training). A veteran/consumer also attended and spoke about returning from the war front, working with the VR, types of services received, living independently and becoming successfully employed. Board members learned how the different programs can work together (e.g., VR, Department of Labor and Regulation), as well as what services are available for veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries and other war related injuries.
- Several updates were provided to the Board during this reporting period on the “SD Division of Rehabilitation Continuous Quality Improvement Plan”. Division staff shared a document which noted each corrective action item, Division staff assigned to each item, and corrective action taken by staff, and timelines. The Board thanked Division staff for their work involved with the deficiencies, correspondence with Rehabilitation Services Administration, and moving forward with service delivery to those eligible for services. The Division agreed to keep the Board informed of continued work in this area.
- The June meeting was scheduled to coincide with the Youth Leadership Forum held at Northern State University in Aberdeen. Several members were involved with planning and participating in activities working with students with disabilities. Members had the opportunity to attend activities and to witness students in action during this unique career and leadership training. This time also allowed members the opportunity to visit with students, parents, and others.
- Avera St. Luke’s Hospital, Drive Smart, Driver Evaluation Program staff were invited to attend the June meeting and share information

about the program. This is a 'one of a kind' program in South Dakota that evaluates a person's driving skills and provides rehabilitation as needed. It can include clinical evaluation, driving rehabilitation, and behind the wheel assessment. The Board was encouraged to spread the word about his available service.

- March is the typical timeframe when the Division presents the required annual updates to the State Plan and Board members receive draft copies of items to review. A committee of the Board met in May and reviewed the attachments requiring updates. It was during the June meeting that the committee reported to the full Board their review and outlined their recommendations. Members were provided further opportunity to provide input as well as the documents being posted on the Division's website for additional comment. The Committee also reported their initial discussion on the Statewide Needs Assessment, regarding the contract, consultant, and information gathering phase.
- The Department of Human Services Secretary suggested that time is allotted on each agenda for "brainstorming" during her visit a year ago. During the June meeting, dialogue continued on hosting public gatherings/listening sessions or disability summits. The need was expressed of identifying a tribal reservation without an American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program to disseminate information on available services and programs. It was emphasized that these types of meetings help build relationships among state, tribal partners and community members. Returning to areas will also help build trust and people will become acquainted, comfortable with faces, names and titles of programs. This will remain a topic of discussion for the Board and Division, as there are five reservations without a vocational rehabilitation program and there is a need to share disability related information.
- Several members attended the Partners in Policymaking listening session hosted by South Dakota Advocacy Services held in Sioux Falls (April). Comments and other information obtained through this

medium are shared with the Board and Division staff and utilized in consideration and development of future state plans.

- The Board, BSBVI and both Divisions entered into an agreement with the University of Northern Colorado/Center for Technical Assistance and Training (CTAT), and Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Region 8, and Robert Jahner to conduct the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for South Dakota. The Board Chairpersons serve on the CSNA Executive Committee along with Division staff to oversee the information gathering and to make recommendations regarding goals and communicate with the full boards and stakeholders.
- During this reporting time period, the Board bid farewell to the agency director who was retiring, met and worked with the interim director, and welcomed the new division director. Also, three new members were welcomed during the September meeting. Time was spent becoming acquainted with one another and learning how to better support one another in their role as a board member.
- South Dakota was among a consortium of six states which received a federal initiative “Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income” (Promise) grant. It will be design and implement interventions for youth ages 14-16 who receive SSI and their families. The overall goal is to identify interventions to impact youth’s education and employment, and reduce a household’s dependence upon public benefits. The Division will keep the Board apprised of grants activities which impacts transition age youth, a priority area for the Board and Division.
- A request was made to provide information about the role of VR, assisting individuals with disabilities in obtaining/maintaining employment, provider and school referrals, and placement and other employment type settings. Staff from the Mitchell VR office along with staff from Career Connections/LifeQuest spoke to working with youth of transition age, Project Skills, participating in

IEP meetings, the role of the employment specialist, job specialist, service coordinator and residential services coordinator and how they partner with vocational rehabilitation services. Consumer choice was highlighted by all, referring to the person's employment plan and speaking to the importance of partnerships between agencies and programs. A person with a disability spoke to the services he received through LifeQuest, Career Connections and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. He talked about his choice to work part-time, because of not wanting to lose services provided through the Home and Community Based Services Waiver. His story also included living independently and his option for transportation.

- The Chairperson attended the RSA National State Rehabilitation Council Forum in June. She reported on her attendance at the forum highlighting the following objectives: empowering Councils, partnerships with State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and advocacy for improvements in the public VR program. Sessions attended: comprehensive statewide needs assessment, effective state goals and priorities, participation in policy development, SRC empowerment, SRC membership issues, SRC roles and responsibilities, state plan development and program financial management. Information was made available to members as well as encouragement to attend these types of events to network with members of SRC's of different states.
- Two members reported on a "Catch the Wave" event being scheduled in Eagle Butte for the first time. Both members are involved with scheduling and planning of the event, which is a one-day event for students with disabilities in high school who are considering post-secondary education. Attendees learn about college life and hear from disability service coordinators, SD Parent Connection, Job Corps, VR, Transition Services and college students. The Board provided financial support of this event.

- The Board consults with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council about the need to fulfill vacancies and soliciting nominations statewide. Nominations were sought for vacancies during the March/April timeframe and appointments/re-appointments were made in July.
- The election of officers is typically conducted during the June meeting. However action was delayed until the September meeting due to a lack of a quorum. Members discussed succession planning and term limits and as a result, two additional members were nominated to serve on the Executive Committee as additional officers.
- Throughout this reporting period the Board and Division encouraged members to attend meetings, events or trainings to enhance the member's ability to understand and meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities. These events include: Fall RehabACTion Conference, Yankton Mental Wellness Conference, Dare to Dream Bi-annual conference, Centers for Independent Living staff training, Lighting the Way – ASD in Our Community conference, and South Dakota Association of the Deaf, SD Housing Development Authority annual conferences.